

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Palestine

W-3668 Note

The Arabs

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The following, dated 10th-18th January, is from an Arab source in Jerusalem who is well qualified to estimate trends in Arab public opinion.

Source

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(i) In the past few weeks, there has been a strong revulsion of feeling against the Mufti among the Palestine Arabs. The public is growing to regard Haj Amin as the man responsible for the present sufferings of his countrymen, to which they feel he has exposed them through ambitious haste to set hostilities in motion. That he should have fomented the present troubles without adequate preparation and without even now showing signs of reaching agreement with the Arab States is said to have caused great bitterness even among his former supporters.

King Abdullah

(ii) The disorganization evident in the Jerusalem office of the Arab Higher Executive has led to the impression that the Mufti's men in reality have no authority and are failing at this time of the national crisis.

(iii) The Mufti's continued rivalry with King Abdullah at a time when the latter's forces in Palestine seem to constitute the only protection for the Arabs is considered shortsighted and presumptuous. It is being felt increasingly that King Abdullah may probably after all have to be called upon immediately after the British evacuation to "come to the Arabs' rescue".

Abdul Qadir al Hussaini

(iv) The activities of Abdul Qadir al Hussaini, whose band is now believed to number at a maximum one hundred men have led similarly to surprised resentment. The man whom the Mufti wishes to act as national leader is felt to have shown himself incapable of any wider strategy than that used in the disturbances of 1938.

(v) The Mufti in considering a man who should serve him well in the post, is stated to have decided that Abdul Qadir would make a good choice if a certain naive and incomplete grasp of affairs were made up for by the efficiency of Dr. David al Hussaini

/and Sami Yusuf al-Rasbi

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and Sami Musa Kazim Pasha. These two men, Abdul Qadir's present lieutenants, are reported to have the final word in most questions of policy which they consider with their immediate chief.

ARMS

(vi) ^(End) Dr. Khalidi is stated to estimate from his own observation that the number of rifles held by Arabs in all Palestine is about 10,000 or 12,000. Of these 4,000 are computed by him to be in the Nablus area, 4,000 in the Hebron area, and the remainder distributed throughout the country. The main part of the total is reported to have been in Palestine before the disturbances began; most of the remainder came from Egypt.

(vii) Profiteering in arms continues: a "bomb" priced at from 3-7 piastres in Egypt is stated to cost a pound or a pound and a half in Palestine. The number of rifles brought in is described as insufficient; that of bombs not more than "a few hundred". Dr. Khalidi and Hilmi Pasha are stated to fear that if the present trend in the Arab-Jewish incidents is maintained, fighting will inevitably become concentrated in the towns, giving an advantage to the Jews.

(viii) The Arabs are alarmed at reports that a Jewish-owned civilian aircraft dropped messages recently to Jewish armed bodies in the Hebron area. The danger represented to the Arabs by the possibility that the Jews may use aircraft for bombing is strongly felt. On that account, the result of an enquiry into the matter which the British authorities are believed to have in hand is awaited with anxiety.